

And everyone, in fact—

and states that expanded their Medicaid programs, administration officials announced Monday.

The total includes 14.1 million adults who joined the insurance rolls since October 2013 and 2.3 million younger adults ages 19 to 25 who were able to remain on their parents' health insurance plans since October 2010, when that provision of Obamacare went into effect.

As if that weren't enough good news, the Department of Health and Human Services also reported that uninsured rates for minorities are plunging.

Quote:

The Latino uninsured rate dropped by 12.3 percentage points between the first quarter of 2014 and the same period in 2015 as 4.2 million adults gained coverage. . . .

About 2.3 million African Americans enrolled, dropping that group's uninsured rate by 9.2 percentage points, and 6.6 million whites obtained coverage, a decline of 5.3 percentage points.

So it is clear that the Affordable Care Act is working just as Congress intended.

Not only are record numbers of Americans gaining health coverage, but historically underinsured communities are now getting access to quality health care.

At some point, my Republican colleagues need to face reality. ObamaCare is helping their constituents.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION AND LORETTA LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to speak a little bit about human trafficking and Loretta Lynch.

The Republican leader is right. In an hour or so the Senate will vote to end debate on the human trafficking and child pornography legislation. That vote is going to fail. The Republican leader knows it is going to fail, just as I do. It is going to fail because Republicans have chosen to manufacture a political fight that has nothing to do with human trafficking.

Abortion legislation has no place in human trafficking legislation. The Republican Congressman who drafted this version of the human trafficking bill in the House said as much. Congressman ERIK PAULSEN said: "There is no reason it should be included in these bills. This issue is far too important to tie it up with an unrelated fight with politics as usual."

We have a long piece out of the New York Times. My friend quoted partially from the Washington Post. But let's be realistic. There has been a sleight of hand here to get the abortion language in this bill.

As this article indicates:

This legislation, which sailed through committee in February, stalled last week when Democrats noticed a provision that would prohibit money in the fund from being used to pay for abortions. The original Senate bill, introduced in the last Congress, made no reference to abortion. Nor did the House's version of the bill, introduced by Representa-

tive Erik Paulsen. Paulsen said, "there is no reason it should be." He said last week, "This issue is far too important to tie it up with an unrelated fight with politics as usual."

Republicans say they routinely add the abortion language to bills, but Democrats say Republicans operated in bad faith—not to mention in violation of Senate norms—by misrepresenting the bill's contents.

This dispute has nothing to do with the needs of the Justice Department. It is beyond irresponsible to strand the Department without a leader, sowing instability and uncertainty in an important executive agency.

The chief law enforcement officer of our country is being detained because of this fight between us, Democrats and Republicans, over whether abortion should be in this bill. We believe it shouldn't be; Republicans believe it should be.

This is a good person who deserves our immediate attention. The Loretta Lynch nomination should be done immediately. There is no reason we can't do this now, today.

Would the Presiding Officer tell us the business of the day?

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 178, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 178) to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Pending:

Portman amendment No. 270, to amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to enable State child protective services systems to improve the identification and assessment of child victims of sex trafficking.

Portman amendment No. 271, to amend the definition of "homeless person" under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to include certain homeless children and youth.

Vitter amendment No. 284 (to amendment No. 271), to amend section 301 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to clarify those classes of individuals born in the United States who are nationals and citizens of the United States at birth.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11 a.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum, and I ask unanimous consent that the time be charged equally.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, at 11 a.m. this morning we will be having a very important vote on human trafficking in an important piece of legislation, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. I am glad this issue is finally getting the kind of attention it deserves, but I would be lying to you if I said I wasn't disappointed in the way this bill has become a political football for people who want to cause the Senate to cease to function entirely or to relitigate issues that have been resolved 40 years ago such as the Hyde amendment.

We in the Senate have an opportunity to do a great deal of good for thousands of people, including children who are victims of sex trafficking, many of whom are young girls not even of high school age. On average the typical victim of human trafficking is between the age of 12 and 14.

But instead of voting to pass this bill last week, as I had originally hoped, the minority leader, the Democratic leader, blocked the vote, and he has consistently taken the position that they are not going to allow us to progress with this legislation. The majority leader offered to give the other side a vote to strip out the language which they find offensive, but that was declined; and instead, the obstruction and the blocking of this legislation continues.

I would like to come back to the question that I have asked myself privately and I have asked here publicly repeatedly, and that is, Why are so many of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle objecting to language they have repeatedly voted for time and time and time again? Why do they want to make this an issue on this piece of legislation, which is one of the rare islands of bipartisan comity, cooperation, and collaboration we have seen in recent times? Most importantly, why are Democrats going to the wall to block a bill that would help thousands of innocent victims of sex trafficking across the country who are crying out for our help? It truly baffles me, but that is what is going on.

Of course, we know human trafficking is a problem all across the country, including my home in Texas. I was recently reminded of a couple of Texas stories about how important it is that we pass this legislation, including a recent story out of Waco, TX, involving the Border Patrol, where it was reported that over the last 5 months the Border Patrol has apprehended 144 known sex offenders trying to sneak back into the United States illegally. So reportedly 100,000 people are trafficked each year, according to the Washington Post. They say an estimated 100,000 children are trafficked each year for sex. Why in the world can't we find some way to set these differences aside, to fight them another day, and to move on doing some good where we can by passing this legislation?

It has, unfortunately, become clear that this obstruction is about politics, plain and simple, because you know there is actually a whole lot of agreement about the importance of this legislation. For example, we have 12 Democratic cosponsors to this legislation. This bogus story you have heard about language being slipped in the bill that they didn't know was there is just that, completely bogus. Each of these Democrats has highly skilled professional staff, and they themselves weren't born last night, didn't fall off the turnip truck. They know what the legislation included, and it had language in it they had voted in favor of repeatedly in previous pieces of legislation.

Then there is the fact that all 20 Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee voted in favor of this legislation, including 9 Democrats, all Members of the Judiciary Committee. Then when it came to the floor last week, all 100 Senators basically consented to bring this legislation forward. So why is it that after so much bipartisan cooperation and trying to work together to solve a real problem and help the victims of human trafficking—particularly those 100,000 children trafficked for sex—how is it this legislation became a political football to relitigate the Hyde amendment? Well, unfortunately, we know the abortion lobby has been working very hard to derail this legislation. Why? Because they care about these victims of human trafficking? Absolutely not, because everyone knows the Hyde amendment language contains an exception for rape and the health of the mother. So under this act, these limitations on spending wouldn't have anything to do with the services available to help those victims of human trafficking.

I know that Members of the Senate on the Democratic side care deeply about this issue. I know the ranking member, the former chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator LEAHY, cares deeply about this issue. I believe all 12 Democratic cosponsors of this legislation care deeply about this issue, and all Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee—all 20 of us who voted in favor of the legislation—care deeply about this issue. But there is one person who appears not to care one bit about this issue, and that is the senior Senator from Nevada, the Democratic leader. He apparently doesn't care at all about the victims of human trafficking. If he did, then I think he would find a way to work with us to pass this legislation.

Unfortunately, we are going to have a vote here at 11:00 which is going to be very telling. I hold out some hope that our Democratic colleagues who cosponsored this legislation or who previously voted for legislation that includes this same type of language or the members of the Judiciary Committee who voted to support this bill at the committee markup will find a way to vote for cloture to allow us to progress to final passage of this legislation.

There is going to be a very important choice. The choice is simply between the victims or party and lobbyists and outside groups who are trying to blow this piece of legislation up in order to relitigate the settled law of the land for the last 40 years.

In fact, the Washington Post editorial yesterday I think stated the issue very well. They said, at the conclusion of their editorial, "the question is whether the Senators who want to accomplish something can overcome the advocacy groups and politicians who would rather use this controversy as one more opportunity to raise funds and to sharpen divisions."

That is absolutely pathetic, that someone would use the plight of these victims of human trafficking to raise funds and to drive divisions between Americans.

So we will find out what the choice is and what Democrats choose. Will they follow the lead of the Democratic leader who apparently does not care about the consequences of this obstruction, and will they find a way in their heart to do what they know is right? Because they voted for this legislation previously, they have agreed to cosponsor it, and, of course, as I said, they voted for previous language that is identical to that contained in this bill.

I will quote from a Texas newspaper, the Corpus Christi Caller-Times, which published an editorial with the headline "Anti-Trafficking bill is nothing toicker about." That should be obvious, but unfortunately, the obvious has to be said, apparently time and time again.

The editorial closes with this line, which I find to be poignant. It says:

This fight is supposed to be against human trafficking. Distracting attention from that fight is shameful.

It is shameful.

Scripture reminds us that it does not profit a person to gain the whole world and lose your soul, and I worry that the Senate is losing its soul and its unique role as an institution where we can actually work out our differences, we can have debate, and we can have votes, and we can actually make some discernible progress forward on behalf of the people we represent.

This is an important time of choosing for Members of the Senate. At 11 o'clock when we have this vote, we will need a handful of brave and courageous Members of the Senate on the other side of the aisle who will say to their leader: This is a bridge too far. We are not going to march in lockstep with the leader and take what could be legislation that will help these victims of human trafficking and turn it into a failure.

This is a time for choosing. I know there are Senate Democrats who care deeply about the victims of human trafficking. Unfortunately, not everybody does, or else we would not be having this obstruction. So I hope that our colleagues, in thinking about this vote today—or perhaps during a sleepless

moment last night as they were contemplating this very important time of choosing—I hope that they will examine their conscience and that they will reflect on the reason why they came to the Senate in the first place. Was it to play these kinds of partisan political games to advance the fundraising interests of the abortion lobby or some other group who wants us to derail this legislation or to relitigate issues that were settled 40 years ago? That is not the reason why I believe the overwhelming number of the Senators came to the Senate. They came here because they wanted to do something good, something positive, something that would help the most vulnerable among us.

We will have that opportunity here today with this vote at 11 o'clock. Shame on us if we cannot rise to the occasion, if we cannot transcend this sort of partisan division and the tug at our sleeves by the outside groups who want to derail this important piece of legislation. Shame on us.

There is going to be a time of choosing. Everybody who votes will make a record. That record will be part of their permanent legacy in this body. History will reflect whom they chose in this fight—the 100,000 children who are trafficked for sex in America who might benefit from this legislation or the abortion lobby that wants us to relitigate this issue based on language that every single Democrat has voted for in one fashion or another time and time again.

This is a phony fight and a phony issue. We ought to do what is right. We ought to pass this legislation as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I hope we will do what is right, but I hope we will step back from either partisan name-calling or ascribing motives to people. Even though my dear friend from Texas voted against the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, I am never going to say he is for violence against women or for human trafficking, even though that bill had the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act as an amendment in it.

While he and the distinguished majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, Senator HATCH, Senator GRASSLEY, and others voted against the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, I would not ascribe to them a motive that they believe in violence against women or in human trafficking. Even though that legislation had a strong anti-human trafficking amendment in it, I do not ascribe their vote against the bill as admitting they are for violence against women or human trafficking.

One of the lessons that I have learned in my time as a Senator is that if you listen to the people you serve, really listen to them, you will almost always do the right thing. This morning, as

some Senators are trying to shut off debate and end our efforts to provide a comprehensive, victim-centered response to the horrible crime of human trafficking, I ask that we stop and listen. Listen to the voices of the survivors. What they are saying is clear: Stop playing politics with our lives.

Holly Austin Smith, a survivor, a girl who ran away at the age of 14, who was bought and sold for sex, put it this way:

Politics should not govern the options available to victims of sex trafficking, especially when such victims often have had their basic human rights taken away by criminals who had only their own agendas in mind.

We ought to stand with these survivors and put aside our agendas. The survivors are asking us to vote against this bill because it includes unnecessary and destructive, partisan language.

A letter signed by the Alliance To End Slavery & Trafficking, Rights4Girls, Shared Hope International, and nearly 100 other anti-trafficking groups says this:

We urge all members of the Senate to turn away from this divisive debate and find a bipartisan approach to this new initiative to protect and serve the needs of survivors.

Two years ago the Senate came together and passed an expansive new authorization of the Violence Against Women Act. I realize some in this body who now say we must vote for this bill voted against the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act. But I worked for months with the remarkable people of the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, a coalition of thousands of organizations representing millions of victims of domestic and sexual violence.

They spent hours upon hours explaining what we needed to do to ensure that we protected all victims—and we listened. Together, we crafted a bill that responded to those needs. I trust these advocates. They have dedicated their lives to making sure survivors have a voice.

And here is what they are telling us:

We write today to express our deep concern about the controversy of inserting the Hyde provision into the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. The House passed a version of that Act that did not include this new Hyde provision and we ask the Senate to do the same.

They are right. The highly partisan House passed a version of the very bill we are debating today that does not contain this unnecessary and destructive provision. That deeply divided body came together and they passed this bill with a unanimous vote just a few weeks ago, without this divisive language that Senator CORNYN has insisted be in the Senate bill. I am confident that if we did the same, we could also pass it easily.

I want to make clear to everyone who is paying attention to this vote, the partisan provision embedded in the Senate version of this bill is not something the survivors of human traf-

ficking are asking for. It is not something the experts in the field who work with them every day are asking for. In fact, those who are closest to the damage wreaked by this terrible crime are asking us to take the provision out.

We are not talking about taxpayer money; we are talking about money collected from the various offenders who have already controlled too much of the lives of these women and girls. These survivors deserve more options, not fewer. It is in response to the request of these human trafficking survivors that I am opposing cloture on this version of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. I support the rest of this bill, and that is why I included it in the comprehensive substitute amendment I filed last week.

Also included in my substitute is a vital component to prevent human trafficking by focusing on runaway and homeless youth. These children are exceptionally vulnerable to human traffickers and we must not turn our backs on them.

If we are serious about helping to end this heinous crime, we must stop playing politics and start listening. Let's listen to the people who suffer from the trafficking. Let's listen to the victims. Let's listen to the experts who have always stood with us on this. They say: Take this provision out. Let's do so. The Republican-controlled House came together and they passed the House version of this legislation unanimously without this divisive language. Shouldn't we do the same thing? This is not a question of whether you are for or against trafficking. I do not think there is anybody who is for it. Those who, like me, actually prosecuted these cases know how important it is. So listen to the victims. They say: Take out this language and let's move forward. I will vote no on cloture so that we can move forward and return to the bipartisan path that we have always walked on this issue.

I yield to the distinguished Senator from Washington State.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor with a simple message for our Republican colleagues: Enough is enough. The bill we are debating today, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, should without question be bipartisan because the bill about combating trafficking is no place for politics. That means it is no place for harmful, partisan measures that restrict women's respective health options. So it is deeply disappointing that over the last week, Republicans have insisted on including such a provision in this Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. Then, instead of working with us to take this provision out, get this bill done, and move on to other important work, they have dug in their heels.

Democrats want to work with Republicans on this legislation and get it back on track. We put forward a substitute that takes out the politics and

focuses on what matters in this debate, which is helping the survivors of trafficking get the justice they deserve. It would be shocking if Senate Republicans refused to support this alternative just because it does not include an expansion of the so-called Hyde amendment that restricts women's access to health services—especially, by the way, since the House has already passed this bill without this harmful women's health provision, just as the Senate did last year. So we know Republicans can support an antitrafficking bill that does not hurt women. There is no reason why we should not be able to shift this back to something that both sides can support.

What makes all of this even worse is that the majority leader is now insisting on even more gridlock and dysfunction. He has said that in efforts to continue a political attack on women's health, he will not only hold up the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act but also the confirmation of a highly qualified nominee for Attorney General. That is indefensible. Loretta Lynch deserves a vote. She has been waiting longer than any of the last five nominees for Attorney General. She has been confirmed by the Senate twice already for her position for previous roles. She deserves to be able to get to work.

The majority leader has said the Senate will not move to her nomination until we finish the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. I would like to note that we voted last night on two other nominations, so it seems pretty absurd to say that we cannot work on both at the same time.

The bottom line is that Senate Republicans have a choice today—politics as usual or working with us to get this done. They can continue to hold up important work, to draw out a political fight we have had again and again, or they can work with us to get our nominee for Attorney General on the job, pass the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, and move on to tackle the many other challenges our country faces today. I really hope they will choose to work with Democrats, fight human trafficking, and help women across the country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the

Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the committee-reported substitute amendment to S. 178, a bill to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Shelley Moore Capito, Steve Daines, Roger F. Wicker, James Lankford, Deb Fischer, Tom Cotton, Ron Johnson, Richard Burr, Daniel Coats, Roy Blunt, Chuck Grassley, Tim Scott, Pat Roberts, Bill Cassidy, Jerry Moran.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the committee-reported substitute amendment to S. 178, a bill to provide justice for the victims of human trafficking, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 72 Leg.]

YEAS—55

Alexander	Ernst	Paul
Ayotte	Fischer	Perdue
Barrasso	Flake	Portman
Blunt	Gardner	Risch
Boozman	Grassley	Roberts
Burr	Hatch	Rounds
Capito	Heitkamp	Rubio
Casey	Heller	Sasse
Cassidy	Hoeven	Scott
Coats	Inhofe	Sessions
Cochran	Isakson	Shelby
Collins	Johnson	Sullivan
Corker	Kirk	Thune
Cornyn	Lankford	Tillis
Cotton	Lee	Toomey
Crapo	Manchin	Vitter
Daines	McCain	Wicker
Donnelly	Moran	
Enzi	Murkowski	

NAYS—43

Baldwin	Hirono	Reed
Bennet	Kaine	Reid
Blumenthal	King	Sanders
Booker	Klobuchar	Schatz
Boxer	Leahy	Schumer
Brown	Markey	Shaheen
Cantwell	McCaskill	Stabenow
Cardin	McConnell	Tester
Carper	Menendez	Udall
Coons	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Mikulski	Warren
Feinstein	Murphy	Whitehouse
Franken	Murray	Wyden
Gillibrand	Nelson	
Heinrich	Peters	

NOT VOTING—2

Cruz	Graham
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 55, the nays are 43.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I enter a motion to reconsider the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on S. 178, a bill to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Shelley Moore Capito, Steve Daines, Roger F. Wicker, James Lankford, Deb Fischer, Tom Cotton, Ron Johnson, Richard Burr, Daniel Coats, Roy Blunt, Chuck Grassley, Tim Scott, Pat Roberts, Bill Cassidy, Jerry Moran.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on S. 178, a bill to provide justice for the victims of trafficking, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 73 Leg.]

YEAS—55

Alexander	Ernst	Paul
Ayotte	Fischer	Perdue
Barrasso	Flake	Portman
Blunt	Gardner	Risch
Boozman	Grassley	Roberts
Burr	Hatch	Rounds
Capito	Heitkamp	Rubio
Casey	Heller	Sasse
Cassidy	Hoeven	Scott
Coats	Inhofe	Sessions
Cochran	Isakson	Shelby
Collins	Johnson	Sullivan
Corker	Kirk	Thune
Cornyn	Lankford	Tillis
Cotton	Lee	Toomey
Crapo	Manchin	Vitter
Daines	McCain	Wicker
Donnelly	Moran	
Enzi	Murkowski	

NAYS—43

Baldwin	Hirono	Reed
Bennet	Kaine	Reid
Blumenthal	King	Sanders
Booker	Klobuchar	Schatz
Boxer	Leahy	Schumer
Brown	Markey	Shaheen
Cantwell	McCaskill	Stabenow
Cardin	McConnell	Tester
Carper	Menendez	Udall
Coons	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Mikulski	Warren
Feinstein	Murphy	Whitehouse
Franken	Murray	Wyden
Gillibrand	Nelson	
Heinrich	Peters	

NOT VOTING—2

Cruz	Graham
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 55, the nays are 43.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The Senate majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I enter a motion to reconsider the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this morning was a sad day for the Senate, when a straightforward bill designed to help the 100,000 or so children who are sex trafficked in America goes down because of the advocacy of a group that wants to turn this into an abortion debate and to change the settled law of the last 39 years.

As I said before the vote, I really feel as if this is a time when the very soul of the Senate is being tested. Are we going actually to break out of these shackles that we seem to be bound by, which say that we are going to turn every issue—no matter how sensitive or how much good could be done—into a political issue that divides us? I would have thought of all the topics where there would be bipartisan consensus, it would be combating the crime of human trafficking.

Indeed, everything that went on before today seemed to give me hope that we would be able to do that. For example, there is the fact that there were 12 Democratic cosponsors of the underlying legislation. In the Senate Judiciary Committee, there were 20 votes, a unanimous vote including 9 Democrats, in favor of the bill in committee, and it came to the floor of the Senate.

As the Presiding Officer knows, ordinarily we would have to jump through some procedural hoops. But thanks to the consent of 100 Senators, we did not have to do that so we could get on the bill and begin the open amendment process without having to jump through those hoops. At least that is what I thought. Then somehow, somewhere, somebody decided they wanted to pick a fight on something that has been the settled law for 39 years; and that is the Hyde amendment.

The Hyde amendment basically says that no taxpayer funds can be used to fund abortion except in the case of rape and in the case of the health of the mother being in jeopardy, as certified by a physician. So one might wonder why people want to fight over the Hyde amendment when the Hyde amendment itself has an exception for sexual assault, which obviously would be the major concern on behalf of any of these victims of human trafficking. That is why this has been called a phantom issue. I would use another word. I would say it is a phony issue. It is a fake fight in order to derail legislation which would demonstrate that we, on a bipartisan basis, can work together and try to solve a real problem and make progress.

I suspect the Presiding Officer had the same experience I did during this last election. Back in Texas, people would say: Can't you guys and gals get anything done in Washington, DC? Why is it so broken and so dysfunctional? Why can't you find common cause on something and make some progress and

deal with real problems that confront the people of Texas or the people of Oklahoma or the people of the United States of America?

Now, that doesn't mean we come up here and leave our principles behind. It is just the opposite. I am not suggesting for a minute, in the interest of compromise, that we leave our principles behind, but there is a lot we can do, consistent with our principles, to help pass legislation which will have a very positive impact on the American people.

The President mentioned issues such as trade as something we can work on together. But little did I imagine that the powers that be would pick on an anti-human trafficking bill in order to try to divide the Senate—in order to peel off the 12 Democratic cosponsors who didn't even vote. Many of them didn't even vote for the bill.

In other words, they were for the bill—enough to cosponsor it—and then this morning they did not vote to see the bill progress to final passage. I don't know how they can explain that or, frankly, how they can reconcile that in their own conscience, recognizing that this legislation was designed to help vulnerable children, by and large, who are victims of what we call modern day slavery—sexual, economic bondage.

This legislation was designed not only to rescue them but to help them heal and begin a path toward a better, more productive life. That is why this morning I said I really felt this was a vote for the soul of the Senate.

I cannot imagine any Senator who does everything they have to do to be elected to get to serve here—the hardship for your family, raising money, and all the stuff you have to do to get here—and then to squander it by refusing to take a step to help the most vulnerable people who exist in our country. It is just beyond my imagination.

But I am afraid this is more than about a piece of legislation. There is an idea here in the Democratic leadership that they really don't want the Senate to be able to function. They don't really want us to be able to pass legislation or solve problems. What they want to do is to have the talking point that after the last election nothing has really changed in the Senate—that it is just as dysfunctional as it was when they were in charge.

I am happy to say I am optimistic—despite this morning's vote—that we will begin to make some progress as soon as next week, when we will, I think, take the first step to pass a budget. It will be the first time a budget has been passed since 2009.

I am grateful to the majority leader, the Senator from Kentucky, for saying that we are going to come back and vote again and again and again on this human trafficking bill until it passes. He is not going to schedule the nomination confirmation vote on the next Attorney General until such time as we get this passed.

Unfortunately, that is what this place has degenerated into—everybody looking for leverage to try to get a little bit more of what they want, and in the process, the very people we are supposed to be trying to work for and trying to help get lost.

I am very disappointed. This is not why I came to the Senate. This is not the kind of Senate I want to serve in. This is not what my constituents—the 26.9 million people I work for in Texas—sent me here to do. They expect more of us. They deserve more of us. I hope, now that this initial vote has been cast—thank goodness for the four Democrats who broke ranks with their leadership on that side of the aisle and decided to vote to advance this legislation, but we still need two more. We still need two more brave Democratic Senators who are going to defy their leadership and not simply follow them off the cliff.

This is what, from a practical political standpoint, I don't understand. One reason why Republicans are in the majority now is because, frankly, the President's policies were repudiated in the last election and the people who ran for reelection as incumbent Senators didn't have a record of accomplishment they could point to. So what they were left with was a referendum on the President's record which they followed down the line, and they had nothing else they could point to that they actually had done on the Senate floor because the Senate had been locked down and no amendments, no good ideas, no votes occurred. We literally had a U.S. Senator from Alaska, for example, who was running for reelection after serving in the Senate for 6 years who could not point to a single bill or amendment that bore his name that had been passed. So when people wondered, What are the issues in this election, they were left with the President of the United States saying: My policies are on the ballot, even though my name is not. Then we had the incumbent U.S. Senator with no record of accomplishments separate and apart from that referendum on the President's policies, and that referendum—the President's policies—lost and the people who enabled them and supported them.

Frankly, I really don't understand the calculation of our colleagues on the other side who have now slavishly voted according to the dictates of their party leadership and said no to the victims of human trafficking who would have benefited from that legislation. I don't know how they reconcile that in their minds. I don't know whether they have had sleepless nights worrying about it or whether their hearts have become so hardened, whether they have become so accustomed to this sort of mindless partisanship that they don't even think about it anymore.

Thanks to the majority leader, we are going to have another opportunity for them to rectify their “no” vote. All we need is two additional Senators who

will vote to progress this legislation given the next opportunity. So I hope our colleagues will reconsider.

RECESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess as under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:04 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Thank you, Mr. President.

First, let me say Happy St. Patrick's Day to all my friends and family and colleagues in the Senate.

(The remarks of Ms. STABENOW pertaining to the introduction of S. 758 are printed in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

Ms. STABENOW. I yield the floor.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE FUTURE OF COLORADO AND AMERICA

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, in 1893 Katharine Lee Bates made her way up the slopes of Pikes Peak and first wrote the words to one of America's greatest patriotic hymns, poeticizing “purple mountain majesties” and “amber waves of grain.”

One hundred years ago, Enos Mills helped preserve “mountain scenes of exceptional beauty and grandeur,” giving to the country the crown jewel of American splendor, Rocky Mountain National Park.

For over a century, visionaries such as John Liff helped to settle the high plains of Colorado, described by Ian Frazier as a “heroic place,” an expanse of splendid isolation with unparalleled sense of space and generations of pioneers.

This is Colorado. From west to east and north to south, the beauty, heritage, and vitality of Colorado calls and beckons across our Nation and the world to those looking and longing for a place to call home, to live and work, to visit and vacation.

Our love for Colorado drives us to be better stewards of the land, to reach for solutions to great challenges, and to find optimism in every vale and valley. For generations, we have challenged our sons and daughters to always look up—look up to that great